

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KABUL

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 202480

FOLLOWING REPEAT NEW DELHI 12189 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO
BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS DATED SEPT 12.

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 12189

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, US

SUBJECT: THE SECRETARY'S VISIT--POLITICAL DIMENSIONS

1. THE INDIANS AWAIT THE SECRETARY'S VISIT, BUT THEY DO NOT ALL HAVE THE SAME EXPECTATIONS FOR IT. WE BELIEVE THE PRIME MINISTER AND HER IMMEDIATE ENTOURAGE ARE FOCUSED PRIMARILY ON THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TRIP. THEIR OBJECTIVES ARE THAT IT SHOULD SIGNIFY THAT THE US ACCEPTS INDIAN PREEMINENCE IN SOUTH ASIA, DOES NOT INTEND TO TRY TO "BALANCE" INDIA AGAINST PAKISTAN, AND ACCEPTS INDIA'S RIGHT TO PURSUE ITS OWN TECHNOLOGICAL "INDEPENDENCE", PARTICULARLY IN THE FIELD OF NUCLEAR POLICY. THEY HOPE IT WILL SIGNIFY THAT THE US ACCEPTS THE NEED TO CONSIDER INDIAN INTERESTS IN PURSUING ITS POLICIES ELSEWHERE IN SOUTH ASIA AND IS CONSCIOUS OF INDIAN SENSITIVITIES ABOUT "GREAT POWER" ACTIVITIES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. MRS. GANDHI WILL
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EXPECT THE US TO EXPRESS SUPPORT FOR "PEACE AND STABILITY" IN SOUTH ASIA. WE BELIEVE SHE WILL INTERPRET THAT TO MEAN AT LEAST TACIT US ACCEPTANCE OF THE SIMLA AGREEMENT WITH PAKISTAN, INDIA'S POSITION ON KASHMIR AND SIKKIM, INDIAN SENSITIVITIES

ABOUT STABILITY IN BANGLADESH, AND INDIA'S SECURITY CONCERNS ALONG ITS NORTHERN BORDER. THE INDIANS INSIST THEY NEED ARMS AND A POWERFUL ARMY BECAUSE OF THE CHINESE AND THAT PAKISTAN HAS NOTHING TO FEAR FROM INDIA. THEY BELIEVE THE PAKISTANI ARMY IS ALREADY LARGER THAN IS NECESSARY AND WILL LOOK CAREFULLY FOR ANY SIGNS THAT THE US IS RECONSIDERING ITS ARMS SUPPLY POLICY ON THE SUBCONTINENT WHICH MRS. GANDHI WOULD INTERPRET AS DESIGNED TO CHANGE THE EXISTING RATIO OF FORCES IN THE AREA. MRS. GANDHI WILL LOOK FOR A POLITICAL RESULT FROM THE VISIT WHICH ENABLES HER TO ARGUE TO HER DOMESTIC AUDIENCE THAT THE US ACCEPTS INDIA'S FULL NON-ALIGNED STATUS AND INDEPENDENCE AND IS NOT CONCERNED ABOUT INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION.

2. HER STYLE, AS THE SECRETARY KNOWS, IS TO LISTEN, NOT LEAD; TO EXPLAIN INDIA'S POSITIONS, NOT TO ASK FOR US ASSURANCES OR ASSISTANCE. THIS IS LIKELY TO BE TRUE BOTH IN HER APPROACH TO POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES. WE WOULD ANTICIPATE THAT SHE WILL SUMMARIZE INDIA'S VIEWS AND ITS PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL, AND WAIT TO SEE HOW THE SECRETARY RESPONDS. WE BELIEVE SHE WILL WANT TO HAVE TIME TO ASSESS THE SECRETARY'S VISITS TO PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH AFTER HIS VISIT TO INDIA, IF THIS IS THE ORDER IN WHICH THE TRIP PROGRESSES, BEFORE DECIDING WHETHER TO MOVE AHEAD ON SPECIFIC AND DETAILED ECONOMIC COOPERATION WITH THE US. SHE WILL, THEREFORE, PROBABLY PREFER TO LIMIT THE PUBLIC DESCRIPTION OF ANY SPECIFIC ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THE CONVERSATIONS WHICH MAY TAKE PLACE TO GENERALITIES. THE SECRETARY'S VISIT WOULD ESTABLISH THE ATMOSPHERE, SET THE SCENE, AND THE DETAILS WOULD BE SPELLED OUT LATER. MRS. GANDHI IS CAUTIOUS AND SUSPICIOUS (NEW DELHI 12063), BUT SHE WANTS THIS VISIT AND WANTS IT TO BE A SUCCESS, A SYMBOL OF THE END OF A PERIOD OF INDO-US STRAINS. SHE WILL NOT EXPECT THAT ALL OF HER OBJECTIVES DESCRIBED ABOVE WILL BE MET BUT WILL LOOK FOR A GENERALIZED SENSE OF US POLICY AND ATTITUDES WHICH, WHEN TAKEN TOGETHER, GIVES HER A "FEELING" THAT THE US UNDERSTANDS AND IS THINKING IN PARALLEL WITH HER OWN CONCEPTION OF THE PROPER INDO-US RELATIONSHIP.

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3. OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH SENIOR GOI OFFICIALS AND WITH MRS. GANDHI'S OWN STAFF UNDERLINE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WANTS THE SECRETARY'S VISIT TO SET A POLITICAL FRAMEWORK WITHIN WHICH OTHER BILATERAL ISSUES CAN THEN BE DISCUSSED. WE DEDUCE FROM THE FLAVOR OF THESE DISCUSSIONS AND OTHERS WE HAVE HAD AT LOWER LEVELS THAT ECONOMIC, CULTURAL, SCIENTIFIC AND INVESTMENT AGREEMENTS WILL FOLLOW ONLY IF SUCH A FRAMEWORK ENABLES HER TO DEFEND HERSELF AGAINST DOMESTIC OR FOREIGN POLITICAL CRITICISM THAT THE US IS SUPPORTING PAKISTAN AGAINST INDIA, EXERTING PRESSURE ON INDIA, EQUATING INDIA WITH ITS NEIGHBORS, AND TAKING INDIA FOR GRANTED. THE DELAYS IN THE SCHEDULING OF THE VISIT AND THE FACT THAT THE VISIT WILL NOT BE ONE "TO INDIA" ALONE BUT TO A CLUSTER OF OTHER STATES IS

SEEN BY SOME INDIANS--HYPERSENSITIVE TO THE FAINTEST SLIGHT--
ARE CAUSING SOME BLUR, AND WE SUSPECT THIS AFFECTS MRS. GANDHI
AND ADDS TO HER INSTINCTIVE WARINESS AS SHE THE VISIT APPROACHES.
IT INCREASINGLY APPEARS THAT SHE HAS HELD THE REST OF THE
GOVERNMENT ON A SHORT LEASH IN TERMS OF PREPARING SPECIFICS
FOR THE VISIT OTHER THAN THE JOINT COMMISSION. IF THERE IS ANY
GENERAL IMPRESSION WE GET, IT IS OF CAUTION ON HER PART.

4. THE BUREAUCRATS ON THE OTHER HAND, PARTICULARLY THE ECONOMIC
BUREAUCRATS, HOPE AND EXPECT THAT IF THE VISIT GOES WELL POLITI-
CALLY IT WILL BRING WITH IT--OR CLOSELY IN ITS WAKE--A SERIES OF
US AGREEMENTS IN THE ECONOMIC FIELD. THE DEGREE OF OPTIMISM ON
THIS FRONT VARIES WITH THE SOPHISTICATION OF THE OFFICIALS AND
POLITICAIANS INVOLVED. THOSE WITH MORE EXPERIENCE AND WHO ARE
BETTER INFORMED ARE AWARE THAT THERE ARE LIMITS ON WHAT THE US
CAN PROVIDE. BUT EVEN THESE EXPECT SUBSTANTIAL BENEFITS, AND
SOME OF THESE ARE SKETCHED OUT IN AN ACCOMPANYING MESSAGE.

5. THE RANK AND FILE OF THE POLITICIANS, PRESS AND PUBLIC,
HOWEVER, EXPECT MUCH MORE. MOST MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, NON-
OFFICIAL BUT EDUCATED INDIANS, AND MOST (BUT NOT ALL) NEWSMEN
WITH WHOM WE HAVE TALKED EXPECT THAT THE SECRETARY'S VISIT WILL
PRODUCE "GREAT THINGS." THESE ARE RARELY ARTICULATED. WE DOUBT
MANY OF THEM HAVE ANY NOTION OF WHAT THEY MEAN. BUT CERTAINLY
FOOD, ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, AND SOME BENIFICENT "LAYING ON THE
HANDS" WHICH WILL BLESS INDIAN POLICY ON A WIDE RANGE OF ISSUES
ARE AMONG THE VAGUE EXPECTATIONS. THE INTENSITY OF THESE EXPEC-
TATIONS MAY GROW AS THE TIME OF THE VISIT APPROACHES. TO SOME
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EXTENT THIS SPRINGS FROM THE DISMAL STATE OF THE INDIAN ECONOMY
AND A GENERAL HOPE FOR SOMETHING OR SOMEONE WHO WILL BRING
RELIEF. THE SECRETARY'S OWN CHARISMA AND THE IMAGE OF THE EX-
TRAORDINARY THINGS HE HAS ACCOMPLISHED ELSEWHERE ON HIS TRAVELS
ARE VIVID IN THE MINDS OF MOST INDIANS. THE FOOD SITUATION IN
INDIA IS WEAK, AND THERE WILL PROBABLY BE AT LEAST SOME FOOD
RIOTING AND CONSTANT NEWS STORIES ABOUT SHORTAGES BETWEEN NOW
AND THE END OF OCTOBER WHEN THE SUMMER HARVEST WILL BE AVAILBLE
FOR DISTRIBUTION. IN THIS CONTEXT, POPULAR EXPECTATION OF US
FOOD ASSISTANCE WILL BE PROPORTIONATELY HIGH AND WILL BE FOCUSED
ON THE SECRETARY'S VISIT. TO MANY INDIANS THE SECRETARY'S
VISIT MAY CONNOTE IN SOME CRUDE SENSE A "COMING TO CANOSSA"
AFTER THE 1971 BANGLADESH WAR. AT THE MINIMUM THERE WILL BE AN
EXPECTATION THAT THE SECRETARY WILL LEAN OVER BACKWARDS TO
EXPRESS HIS RESPECT FOR THE DIGNITY AND IMPORTANCE OF INDIA.
THE "LEFT" WITHIN CONGRESS, THE COMMUNISTS, AND THE RADICAL
"RIGHT" (THE JANA SANGH) ARE EXTREMELY UNEASY ABOUT THE ENTIRE
V

SV. THEY WILL ATTACK THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE SECRETARY
WHETHER THE TALKS GO WELL OR BADLY. THEY WILL CRITICIZE THE
US (AND PROBABLY BE JOINED BY A MORE GENERAL SEGMENT OF THE
POPULATION) IF THE VISIT DOES NOT PRODUCE OR PROMISE SUBSTANTIAL

CONCRETE ECONOMIC BENEFITS FOR INDIA. BUT THEY WILL ALSO WARN
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